

LOCAL NEWS

Land purchase suspicious, believe park officials

Written by Noel Edey Saturday, Jun 19 2021, 5:00 AM



(file photo)

Glenbow Ranch Park Foundation (GRPF) officials, and others, are having a hard time believing Alberta Transportation purchased almost 14 quarter-sections of land across the Bow River from the provincial park for a gravel operation.

GRPF executive director Sarah Parker says they question if this is truly the reason behind the purchase when the province has an abundance of gravel resources in the immediate area. The government operates the Star Pit in Bearspaw and has accessed the old Burnco pit for the Stoney Trail extension.

"Whether the land is truly being used as a gravel pit or if there are other reasons related to the Glenbow East reservoir option we're not aware of, both are concerning."

She says she's never heard of a gravel pit of that magnitude, and for it to be located across the river from a provincial park is a questionable decision.

"To purchase land with that much taxpayer dollars for a gravel pit with no environmental or health studies and impact assessments done, that we know of, seems like a violation of Albertans trust, quite frankly."

The government doesn't appear entirely transparent on the purchase at this point, and outside sources have provided some other alarming accounts on what is said to have been a \$63 million purchase.

"Sources that we've reached out to have indicated that the government's initial interest had been in the portion of the lands closer to the Bow River, which would lead us to suspect that this was in fact connected to the East Glenbow reservoir options."

With the 2,200-acre land purchase by Alberta Transportation near the Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park, GPRF stakeholders are concerned the engagement is a sham.

"Although Phase 2 is not scheduled for completion until the spring of 2023, it appears that our provincial government has unilaterally chosen the Glenbow East location for this new reservoir and is now conducting a public engagement process that appears to be a sham, wasting millions of dollars on a project which if it proceeds will cost taxpayers billions of dollars."

Park stakeholders currently estimate the reservoir will cost \$5 billion to develop.

Yet, she believes it's no reason for park supporters to throw in their cards. Parker says recent history has shown that the public can have an impact on reversing government decisions and that people should become fully engaged in the public consultation now underway.

"The Protect Alberta Parks movement was listened to by our government. We elect these governments to listen to us, and so I urge everybody to take part in the stakeholder engagement process for these projects. We will continue to support the engagement process, and support Albertans making their voices heard."

Additionally, Parker says the foundation will continue to engage with the province on the project and drive home its opposition to the Glenbow East option.

Alberta Environment and Parks is currently in the feasibility stage of examining flood mitigation options on the Bow. Besides Glenbow East, other options are to expand the existing Ghost Lake reservoir or develop a reservoir in the Stoney Nakoda Nation

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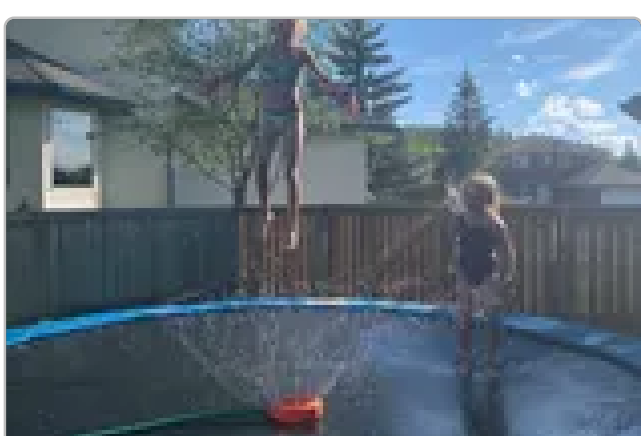
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